

*This is a letter someone might have written after the Chicago fire.*

Dear Mother,

I hope you are well. I miss the family. Don't worry. I am doing fine. As you know, we had a big fire. I was scared. But it turned out all right for me. I don't have a place to live right now. I'm living in a tent. But I am healthy. And soon I will have a new home.

When the fire started, we all ran out into the street. We had never seen such a big fire. There was smoke. You could not see the stars because of the smoke.

You would have been proud of me. I did not run away. I went to help. I knew that this would be a big job. The fire department could not put the fire out. If we ran, the city was lost.

I joined a line of people passing buckets along. One person was at the river's edge. He pulled water from the river in the bucket. Then he gave that to the next person in line. We all kept passing the bucket along. The last person handed it to a fireman who would pour it on the street to stop the fire from going farther.

We wanted to keep doing that. But the fire kept coming closer. We had to turn back. We walked all the way downtown. Even there the fire was burning. I was afraid.

I went into the river. It was cold. Then I swam to the other side of the river. There were many people in the river. They were in boats. One of them pulled me up into his boat. He said, "We need to pull together to get through this." I don't know how to find him now. I want to thank him. He did not have to take care of me. He had his whole family to take care of in that boat.

Now I am very tired, so I will stop my letter. I have been working hard all day. We are building our new home. I hope you can come to visit soon. Can you bring some clothes? Don't worry. We have enough. I would like some new ones. The stores are not open yet.

Your loving son, John

## Identify, analyze, and infer motive – Fiction

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2009.

*Choose the best answer for each question.*

1. Why did John write the letter?

- a. to ask for clothes
- b. to tell his mother he was fine
- c. to tell about the fire
- d. to tell how they put out the fire

2. Why does John ask for clothes?

- a. He lost his in the fire.
- b. He wants to look good.
- c. He wants to get clean clothes.
- d. He knows his mother will send them.

3. Why did John help put out the fire?

- a. He was afraid.
- b. He wanted to save the city.
- c. He wanted to be a hero.
- d. He wanted his mother to be proud of him.

4. Why did the man pull John out of the river?

- a. because there was room in the boat
- b. because John was drowning
- c. because he wanted to be a hero
- d. because people should help each other

5. *Write your own answer to this question. Why do you think John tells his mother how he helped fight the fire?*

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### TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

**Answers:** *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	b	a	b	d

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.  
Because he wants her to be proud of him.